JAN 15 1936

Instructor Literature Series—No. 64

Child Life in the Colonies

NEW AMSTERDAM

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INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES

Child Life in the Colonies

New Amsterdam

BY

Virginia Baker

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DANSVILLE, N. Y.

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Annetje

Child Life in New Amsterdam

I am going to tell you about a little girl who lived more than two hundred years ago in what is now the city of New York.

This little girl was called Annetje. "What a strange name for an American child!" you exclaim. But Annetje was not an American child in the true sense of the word.

Annetje's parents were Dutch, and were born in the Netherlands, or Holland, which is the country of the Dutch people and is in Europe. But Annetje herself was born in America.

I will tell you how Annetje's home came to be in America. In the year 1609, a brave sailor

named Henry Hudson, who had already made some daring voyages, was sent by the Dutch East India Company, to explore the ocean further.

At that time the Dutch people were largely engaged in commerce. They owned more ships than did all the other nations of Europe together. One of their cities, Amsterdam, was a great commercial-centre.

Henry Hudson, or as the Dutch called him, Hendrick Hudson, commanded a small vessel called the "Half-Moon." He had a crew of twenty Dutchmen and Englishmen.

At first Hudson steered the "Half-Moon" in a northerly direction. But the intense cold and huge icebergs of the Arctic Ocean terrified his men, so he turned his vessel about and sailed towards the west.

He soon passed Greenland and, continuing on in a more southerly course, reached Newfoundland. Sailing on and on, he skirted Cape Cod and, at last, came to the entrance of Delaware Bay.

After slightly exploring this bay, he turned the "Half-Moon" and again went northward. Presently, he found himself at the mouth of a beautiful river.

Hudson sailed up this river as far as his ship could go. He was charmed with the beauty of its shores. The Indians who dwelt near by came to welcome him, and gladly exchanged the skins of wild animals for knives, beads, and hatchets.

When Hudson returned to Holland he said much in praise of the "Groot River," or "Great River," which he had discovered. It was named in his honor and ever since has been called the "Hudson River."

The Dutch laid claim to all the country about the Hudson, to which they gave the name "New Netherlands." They planted trading-posts in the New Netherlands and bought the furs of the otter and beaver from the Indians.

A log fort and a few log huts were built on Manhattan Island, at the mouth of the Hudson. This settlement was called New Amsterdam.

It was the beginning of the present great city of New York.

At first, few settlers came to New Amsterdam. But, as years went on, more and more people left Holland to build new homes in America. Annetje's father and mother were among these colonists. New Amsterdam had grown into a thriving town by the time that Annetje was seven years old.

It was a very quaint town, quite unlike the New York that we know. It was, indeed, very Dutch in appearance. Most noticeable were the many windmills perched upon the hill tops, their whirring sails looking like the wings of great birds. The house in which Annetje lived was much like all the other houses in the town. These houses were built of wood, with their gable ends set to the street. The gable ends were not of wood, but of black and yellow bricks brought from Holland and arranged in a pattern like the top of a checker-board.

In each house were many doors and windows. The windows were small, sometimes

containing only two panes of glass. The doors were divided into halves, an upper and a lower. In the upper half were set two bull's-eyes of thick green glass. The doors opened with a latch and were supplied with knockers of iron or brass.

On either side of the doors were seats, looking very comfortable and inviting. The house roofs were high and steep and surmounted by one or more gilded weather-cocks. The date at which the houses were built appeared in iron letters on the fronts.

Before the houses were rows of poplar trees, and the dooryards were bright with beds of gay tulips, roses, lilies, sunflowers, pinks, and marigold. Side by side with the flowers grew cabbages, lettuce, beans, and cucumbers. Herbs for medicine and for kitchen use mingled with these, and hop vines clustered everywhere.

At break of day, every spring and summer morning, Annetje was awakened by loud blasts of a horn. The horn was blown by the town cow-herd, who sounded it at each door as he

passed along the streets. In answer to his summons the cows of the townspeople poured from stables and gateways, the bells hanging at their necks jangling merrily as they wended their way to the green pastures which were their feeding places.

As soon as her eyes opened, Annetje sprang from her little "trek bedd," or trundle bed, and quickly dressed herself. A very quaint looking figure she was when, at last, she joined the rest of the family at the breakfast table.

Her stockings were blue with a bit of red embroidery at the ankles, and her tiny high-heeled shoes were ornamented by bright silver buckles. She wore a sort of waistcoat of calico, and many skirts that stood out stiffly and gave her quite an umbrella-like appearance. The outer skirt was striped with blue and yellow and was partly covered by a blue linen apron.

Annetje's hair was combed straight back from her forehead, and kept in place by a quilted calico cap. Around her neck was a string of white coral beads. Her round, rosy Dutch face

Breakfast

was dimpled with smiles. Her two brothers, Jacobus, twelve years old, and Oloff, aged nine, were dressed in a fashion very different from that of the boys of today. They wore yellow stockings, shoes with buckles, gay scarlet jackets, and several pairs of trousers, one over another. If Annetje resembled an umbrella, certainly Jacobus and Oloff looked much like a couple of human balloons.

The "goede vrouw," Annetje's mother, aided by Gooseje, the maid servant, served the breakfast to the hungry brood of little folks. There was plenty of good Dutch food upon the table, sausages, rye bread, grated cheese, suppawn, and fresh, sweet buttermilk. But I must tell you that suppawn was not a true Dutch dish. It was a food which the Indians taught the Dutch to prepare, a sort of porridge made of corn meal and milk boiled together. Annetje would not have thought her breakfast complete without a bowl of suppawn.

Breakfast over, the three children at once set about the tasks which, every morning, they

were expected to do. Jacobus brought wood and water to the kitchen, Oloff fed the poultry, and Annetje knitted diligently upon a stocking of soft, blue wool. At half-past seven work was laid aside, and our little friends started for school.

You must not think that their school was at all like the one which you attend. In those early times there were no such large, handsome schoolhouses in New Amsterdam as are now found in the city of New York.

The school attended by Annetje and her brothers was kept in a small room which would have seemed to you quite bare and unattractive. The scholars sat on wooden benches and were expected to be very quiet and attentive. The teacher was a stern-faced man, who maintained strict order by the aid of a long birch rod.

There were no pots of blooming flowers in the schoolroom windows, no glass globes filled with pretty goldfish, no beautiful pictures on the walls, no prettily bound schoolbooks, no

busy work, no colored crayons, no boxes of bright paints. Annetje would have opened her blue eyes wide in wonder had any one of these things been brought into the room.

The morning exercises began with prayer. Then the children were taught how to read and to spell, to "cipher"—that is, to do what you call number work—and to write with pens made of goose quills. The teacher also instructed them in the church catechism. The session closed at eleven o'clock with another prayer.

Annetje walked homeward from school very demurely, but you may be sure that Jacobus and Oloff were not so quiet. When well out of the school master's sight and hearing they ran, and jumped, and laughed, and shouted, as gleefully as the school boys of today do.

You may be certain that all three of the children were quite ready for dinner when home at length was reached. And a very nice dinner they found awaiting them every noon-time. Sometimes they had venison, sometimes

duck, turkey or, perhaps, goose. There were often great lobsters, over a foot long, oysters, crabs, shad, or some other kind of fish. The Dutch believed in always having their tables well supplied with solid food.

So Annetje's mother served with her meats and fish a great many vegetables, cabbage and potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips and beets.

For dessert the children had pies of apple and pumpkin, ginger cakes, and honey cakes, crisp doughnuts, and, best of all, rich "oly koeks" glistening with sugar. There were fruits, too, in their season, apples and cherries, plums and melons, and always plenty of cheese, and milk, cream, or buttermilk.

Dinner was scarcely ended ere it was time for school again. The afternoon session was very much like that of the morning. It closed at four o'clock. Then away scampered Jacobus and Oloff, with a score of their chosen schoolmates, to play marbles, or "knuckle bones," until tea-time. "Knuckle bones" was a favorite game with the New Amsterdam boys. It

Knuckle Bones

was played with the knuckle bones of sheep, very much as you play jackstones, today.

Annetje and her dear friends Tryntje, Anna, and Neltje, hurried homewards, chattering blithely all the way. At the back of Annetje's house was a sort of bower formed by a frame work covered with vines. In this bower the little girls loved to play with their dolls, Katrina, Elsa, and Maryje. I wish you might have seen those dolls with their round Dutch faces, staring eyes, and straight, stiff arms and legs.

Annetje thought her Katrina very beautiful, and spent many hours knitting stockings and making skirts, and caps, and waistcoats for her.

The children played happily until the faint sound of the cow-herd's horn echoed in the distance. The cows were coming back from the pastures, and the horn reminded Neltje and Tryntje that it was time they, too, were thinking of home. The dolls were tenderly placed in the bright calico pockets worn at their sides, and, bidding Annetje good night, the two little girls reluctantly left the bower.

Presently Oloff and Jacobus appeared, tired and hungry.

As soon as supper was ended Annetje hurried to her mother's room. There in the deep-hooded wooden cradle lay Tytje, the rosy little baby sister whom Annetje loved dearly. Tytje began to laugh and crow when she saw Annetje. Annetje lifted her from the cradle and a gay romp followed. But bye and bye, Tytje's white lids began to quiver. Then Annetje replaced the baby in the cradle and, as she gently rocked it to and fro, sang a quaint Dutch lullaby. This is what she sang—

"Trip a trop a tronjes,
The pigs in the bean patch,
The cows in the clover,
The horses in the oat field,
The ducks in the water,
The calves in the long grass,
But my baby is sweetest of all."

When Tytje was fast asleep in her soft downy nest, Annetje crept softly from the room.

If it were a warm, pleasant evening she found her father, mother, and brothers seated on the benches beside the house door. The good

father talked to his children of Holland with its dykes and windmills, and its queer houses with storks' nests on the roofs. He told them, too, how brave Hendrick Hudson, in the stout little "Half-Moon" had discovered the river on whose waters they had, themselves, often sailed.

When bed-time arrived the children rose, bade their parents good night, and went quietly up stairs. I have told you that Annetje slept in a "trek bedd." Now I must describe the sleeping place of Jacobus and Oloff. It was a sort of bench built into an alcove set in the wall. It was furnished with a feather bed and pillow. In winter, another feather bed served as blankets, sheets, and coverlid combined. In this cozy nook the two boys were snug and warm the coldest nights.

When I tell you that school was kept upon Saturdays as well as other week days, you will doubtless think that the New Amsterdam children had a very hard time. But you are mistaken. The Dutch were a jolly people who liked to see their children happy.

All the boys and girls in New Amsterdam were divided, according to their ages, into bands called "companies." Each company had a leader whom its members obeyed. The company to which Annetje belonged included all her dearest friends and playmates.

Each year, upon her birthday, Annetje was allowed to invite her "company" to an afternoon party. This party was a great event you may be sure. The little girls all wore their very best frocks and caps, and their hair was as smooth as "orange butter" could make it.

The little boys appeared in their gayest trousers and jackets, with shoe buckles bright and shining.

The whole house was given up to the little folks, and they romped and played to their hearts' content. And they feasted to their hearts' content, too, on chicken and turkey, short-cakes and krullers, jumbles, izer cookies, and all sorts of other Dutch dainties.

May Day and New Year's Day were the two famous holidays of New Amsterdam. The

morning of May Day was ushered in by the firing of guns and a great deal of noise of every kind. There was much feasting, and visiting, and May poles were erected in various places. "Annetje's company" had their own May poles, gay with flowers and ribbons, round which they danced and frolicked merrily.

Annetje hardly knew which she liked best, May Day or New Year's Day—"Nieuw-Jaar" she called it. Great preparations were always made in New Amsterdam for the "Nieuw-Jaar" feast. For a fortnight before the arrival of the great day, Annetje's home was in a bustle.

The whole house was swept and brushed and scrubbed, until not a speck of dust could be seen anywhere. Chairs and tables, mirrors and candlesticks were dusted and rubbed and dusted again. And the kitchen was fragrant with the odor of meats, and pies, and cakes, and other delicacies with which shelves and dressers were loaded.

Jacobus was kept busy running errands and

bringing great armfuls of firewood, while Annetje and Oloff assisted their mother in polishing the family silver. For children in New Amsterdam were expected to make themselves useful in every possible way.

Annetje dearly loved the beautiful bright silver pieces. There were quaint "monkey spoons" with apes' heads on their handles, fat little salt cellars, mugs, cups, tankards and bread baskets. There were porringers and sauce boats, tea and coffee pots. There were sugar boxes shaped like shells and a dear little milk pitcher in the form of a cow which was the children's favorite piece.

When the "Nieuw-Jaar" at length arrived, the great parlor, rarely used except upon holidays, was thrown open and soon the house was thronged with guests. All day long the friends and neighbors came pouring in to offer their wishes for a "Happy New Year!" and to taste the "goede vrouw's" toothsome dainties. All was joy and laughter and merriment.

Very weary, indeed, was Annetje when the

long, jolly day came at length to an end; and she slept so soundly that even the voice of the watchman calling the hour of dawn failed to rouse her. For in winter, when the cow-herd could no longer drive the cattle to pasture, the townspeople depended upon the "rattle watch" to awaken them in good season every morning.

How many American children know that the custom of decorating eggs at Easter time was introduced into this country by the Dutch? The little folks of New Amsterdam would have thought Easter very incomplete without the giving and receiving of these eggs. Every year Annetje and her mother prepared several dozen —hens', ducks' and geese's eggs—coloring them red, blue and yellow, pink, purple and green. There was a wee pigeon's egg, too, for Katrina, the doll.

But the festival that Annetje loved best of all was the feast of St. Nicholas, that good saint whom you know as Santa Claus. Annetje called him "Sant Nicolaus," and on the eve of his feast day she always hung her stocking by

the fireplace that he might fill it with gifts.

Jacobus and Oloff hung their stockings, also, beside Annetje's and, next to theirs, the "goede vrouw" pinned another, tiny and plump, which belonged to baby Tytje.

The fireplace where the stockings hung was a real Dutch fireplace, wide and deep. It was faced with square blue and white tiles representing Bible scenes, the "Flight into Egypt," "Jonah and the whale," and many others, in which all the figures were dressed in Dutch costumes giving them a very quaint appearance. The chimney was so very large that the children felt sure Sant Nicolaus could never find difficulty in getting down it. Every year they fell asleep listening for the sound of his sleigh bells but, although they never heard them among the tree-tops, they always found their stockings crowded with gifts in the morning—cakes, sweetmeats, and toys.

There was much feasting and visiting on Sant Nicolaus' Day in New Amsterdam, just as there was upon May Day and New Year's Day. An-

netje and her brothers were dressed in their gayest attire, and enjoyed themselves by going from house to house to see what the saint, the "goed heilig man"—good, holy man—had brought as presents to their playmates.

Having learned so much about the manner in which Annetje passed other days, I am sure that you will like to know how she spent her Sundays. Although Sunday was not kept so strictly in New Amsterdam as in Puritan New England, the greater part of the people attended church very regularly.

At the sound of a drum loudly beaten on Sunday mornings, Annetje, with her brothers, followed her parents to the quaint little church. If it were winter time, both she and her mother carried little "foot stoves" in their hands, for the church building was unheated and, often, the services were conducted with the church doors wide open even when snow was falling. As the services were very long, it would not be strange if Annetje enjoyed going to church in summer rather than in winter.

She sat very still in her place, however, whether she felt cold or warm, while the congregation was assembling. She watched with interested eyes the clerk and his assistants carry up the aisle the cushions brought from the City Hall for the "Magistrates' Pew," in which the "burgomasters," or ruling men of the town, always sat.

She always felt a thrill of awe when the Governor of the New Netherlands—stout old Peter Stuyvesant—entered the church. He had a stern, determined face and was very gorgeous in his shining silver buttons and buckles, his flowered silk and velvet garments and his long curling wig. But what most interested the children in the Governor was the fact that he had lost one leg and, in its place, wore a leg made of wood ornamented with strips of silver.

The church service was very long, and in spite of herself Annetje often dozed before it ended. She liked to sing the psalms, but she understood very little of the sermon preached

by the "dominie," as the minister was called. During the sermon the clerk had charge of the great hour glass which stood near the pulpit, and which he sometimes turned three times before the dominie ceased speaking.

In the middle of the sermon a pause was made while the deacons collected the contributions. They walked up and down the aisles, thrusting into each pew long poles having "sacjes," or bags of cloth, hung upon hoops at the ends, and into these bags the people dropped their money. On each bag was a small bell whose tinkle warned the congregation of the deacons' approach.

I am afraid that Jacobus and Oloff did not enjoy the service as much as Annetje. It was very hard for the restless little lads to sit quietly during the dominie's preaching, but if they grew uneasy they were quickly stilled by a touch of the sexton's rod, or whip.

Sometimes in early autumn, Annetje's father took her into the country to visit her cousin, Metje. Metje lived upon a farm, and

Annetje thought this farm, next to her own home, the most delightful place in the world.

The farm house was a long, low, rambling building full of quaint little windows, short steep flights of stairs, cupboards, closets, and all sorts of rooms, big and little. Annetje was never tired of roaming from cellar to garret.

In the great cellar were huge bins stored full of apples, potatoes, turnips and other vegetables. Side by side with the bins were rows of vinegar and cider barrels, hogsheads of corned beef and salt pork, firkins of butter, lard, and pigs' feet, kegs of salted shad and mackerel. Swinging shelves supported jars of pickles and sweetmeats, with head-cheese and sausages, rolliches and cheeses. The cellar was full of delicious odors which the children sniffed with delight.

A more charming play-room than the garret Annetje could not imagine. There were great boxes and sea chests pushed far under the eaves, behind which were famous hiding places. There were old tables and stools, cra-

dles and beds, discarded pots and pans, broken dishes and jugs, indeed everything needful for playing house with Metje and her dolls.

Best of all, there was the smoke house opening into the great chimney, and hung with hams and sausages, sides of bacon and dried beef. The children transformed this into anything their fancy pleased. Sometimes it was an enchanted castle, sometimes the underground home of elves and dwarfs, sometimes an Indian wigwam, sometimes the cabin of Hudson's ship the "Half-Moon."

For the snug, tidy sleeping rooms Annetje cared little, but she loved the great kitchen dearly. The floor was scoured as white as soap and sand could make it. The long dresser glittered with rows of pewter dishes that shone like silver. The great logs in the huge fireplace blazed merrily, filling the whole room with a ruddy glow.

From the rafters overhead hung ears of corn and festoons of dried apples and peaches and strings of scarlet peppers. Two great spinning

wheels stood in opposite corners, with bags of wool waiting to be spun into yarn beside them.

An open door gave a glimpse of the milk room with its churn, and long shelves laden with milk pails and milk pans and pats of freshly made butter.

Annetje peeped into the farmhouse parlor with a feeling of awe—she and Metje were rarely allowed to enter it. It was not so grand as her own parlor in New Amsterdam, but Annetje thought it a very beautiful place.

The great round table and big claw-footed chairs were polished until they reflected the children's faces. The andirons, seemed to be made rather of gold than brass. The silver in the corner cupboard appeared to wink a thousand sparkling eyes, and Annetje gazed enchanted at the tall mantel piece, decorated with shells and dried grasses and strings of bright colored birds' eggs.

And the farm yard with its great shadowy barn, its snowy ducks and geese, its hens and turkeys, its horses and pigs, its cows and calves,

was not a whit less enchanting than the house. And Annetje thought that the wheat fields and orchard, the corn fields and green meadows stretching to the silvery Hudson, were almost as beautiful as Fairyland.

Metje loved the farm dearly, as all children love their own homes. But she was very fond of visiting New Amsterdam which to her seemed a very large and bustling place.

One August,—it was in the year 1664—while Metje was at Annetje's home, an event happened which neither of the children ever forgot. When Metje became an old, old lady she used to tell her grandchildren about it.

Early one bright morning the town of New Amsterdam was awakened by the booming of guns. The people sprang from their beds in terror and soon the streets echoed with the cry, "The English! The English!" Men rushed from house to house notifying the people that four English war vessels were in the bay below the town.

At that time England and Holland were at

war. So England sent its ships to try to take the New Netherlands away from the Dutch.

Governor Stuyvesant, who was absent from New Amsterdam, hurried back to the town with all speed, and did his best to save it from the enemy. But New Amsterdam was in no condition to resist the well-armed English. And the New Amsterdam people, who saw that they could not well defend themselves, preferred to yield to their foes rather than to sacrifice their lives and their property.

So in September, the Dutch flag that had floated over New Amsterdam was hauled down and the English flag was raised in its place. How Annetje wept when she saw the cross of St. George flying in the morning breeze!

Even the name of the town was changed from New Amsterdam to New York in honor of the King of England's brother, the Duke of York. But for a very long time Annetje would constantly forget to say the new name. It sounded strange and unnatural to her. As for Metje, she returned home quite broken-hearted.

She felt that the town would never seem just the same to her.

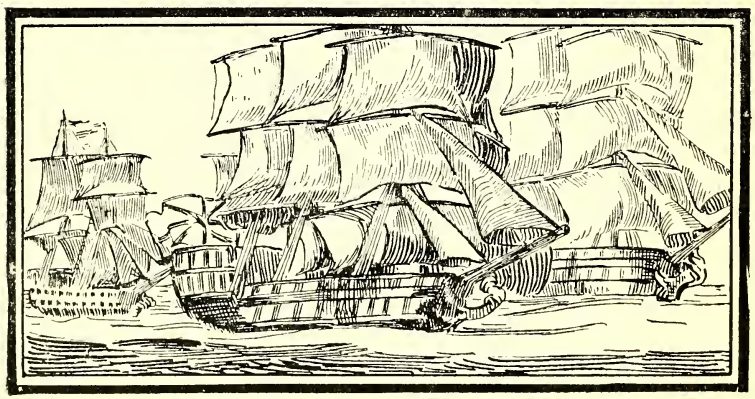
And it never was the same, for English people came to live there, and English ways and manners, quite unlike those of the Dutch, were gradually introduced. The English language, too, began to be taught in the schools. Oh, how hard it was for Annetje's little Dutch tongue to pronounce some of the long, strange-sounding words!

After a time, however, Annetje became more used to English customs. She learned to speak the language, and to like some of the dear little English girls who were her schoolmates.

It is now many years since Dutch New Amsterdam became English New York. And it is many years since the Revolutionary War, when English New York became a part of the United States. But, even now, you will find descendants of the early Dutch settlers living in New York. You will find there, too, remnants of old Dutch customs that are unknown in other parts of our country.

All about what was once the New Netherlands linger quaint, old Dutch legends. One of our American authors wrote charming stories founded on these legends which you will like to read when you are older.

New York is, to-day, the largest city in the United States and the largest city of the world. But you must never forget that it grew out of the Dutch town of New Amsterdam — the town which little Annetje knew and loved.



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